



Our understanding of ancient Pre-Columbian civilizations has changed significantly as the result of archaeological research in the last fifty years. Major projects during this period included dealing with cultural change in different contexts (Valley of Mexico, Oaxaca), regional research projects ("Olmec"), as well as attempts to understand more general trends in interpreting Pre-Columbian art and ideology (Codex Cihuacoatl, Templo Mayor). This book presents both the changes that occurred in the last few decades, and the impact

that they had on our understanding on ancient Mesoamerican religions and cultures. It also includes references to some lesser-known research traditions (such as Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia), as well as to the work of scholars like Jacques Soustelle or Didier Boremanse. With the insistence on clear methodology, based on field research, this book uses the context of specific archaeological finds in order to put Pre-Columbian Mesoamerican cultures in a historical perspective. In terms of method, the author follows R. E. W. Adams, Jeremy Sabloff, Robert J. Sharer and other archaeologists in emphasizing the "field archaeology school" approach, with its insistence on using the data acquired in context. Archaeological and anthropological research is in itself fascinating enough to not need stolen artefacts, forged vases, fantastic stories and invented mythical genealogies. The main goal of this book is to produce a methodologically sound and ethically valid interdisciplinary introduction into the exciting world of ancient Mesoamerica.



ARCHAEOPRESS ARCHAEOLOGY www.archaeopress.com

Bošković

Mesoamerican Religions and Archaeology

ARCHAEOPRESS

MESOAMERICAN RELIGIONS AND ARCHAEOLOGY



ESSAYS IN PRE-COLUMBIAN CIVILIZATIONS

Aleksandar Bošković

ARCHAEOPRESS PRE-COLUMBIAN ARCHAEOLOGY 7

MESOAMERICAN
RELIGIONS AND
ARCHAEOLOGY

ESSAYS IN PRE-COLUMBIAN
CIVILIZATIONS

Aleksandar Bošković

ARCHAEOPRESS PRE-COLUMBIAN ARCHAEOLOGY 7

ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD
GORDON HOUSE
276 BANBURY ROAD
OXFORD OX2 7ED

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978 1 78491 502 5
ISBN 978 1 78491 503 2 (e-Pdf)

© Archaeopress and the individual authors 2017

Cover: Tikal, Structure 5D-43, probably built before 700 CE, with the Temple of the Jaguar (Temple I) in the background. The structure was built along the East Plaza Ballcourt, and it is one of the finest examples of the “talud-tablero” style, which was typical of Teotihuacan in Central Mexico, and probably exported to Tikal with the new ruling family in the late 4th century CE.

Back cover: Ceramic vessel with the duck-shaped lid. Petexbatún, Guatemala, around 700 CE.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owners.

Printed in England by Oxuniprint, Oxford

This book is available direct from Archaeopress or from our website www.archaeopress.com

Contents

Foreword	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Preface	1

Part One – Cultures in Context

1. Regional Perspectives on the Olmec	5
2. Comparing Changes in Mesoamerica	7
3. Pre-Columbian Ceramics and the Maya	9
4. Explaining Copan	13
5. Vision and Revision	15
6. Ancient Maya Politics and Ideology	17
7. Paletín’s Discovery of the New World	19
Introduction	19
An Overview of Research	19
Las Casas and the Conquest of the Americas	21
Vinko Paletín: Looking for the Compromise	22
The Maya Civilization of the Yucatán Peninsula, as seen by Paletín	23
Concluding Remarks	24
8. Codex Borbonicus	26
Introduction	26
The Content of the Manuscript	27
Deities of the Codex Cihuacoatl	29
Possible Functions of the Manuscript	33

Part Two – Myths, Dreams, and Religions

9. Religions of Mesoamerica	35
10. Mesoamerican Dualism	37
11. Forest of Kings	39
12. The Meaning of Maya Myths	42
Introduction: Method, Context and Interpretation	42
1. Ages of the World	44
2. The Maya Moon Goddess and the Mystery of Creation	49
3. Résumé: The Character of Maya Deities	51

13. Interpreting Tlaloc	55
14. Templo Mayor	56
15. Aztec Great Goddesses: Their Functions and Meaning	58
16. Jacques Soustelle’s Studies of Aztec Religion	62
1. Introduction	62
2. The Role and Function of Religion	63
3. The Principle(s) of Duality	64
17. Mayan Folklore from Lake Atitlan	66
18. Lacandon Stories	68
19. A Discourse-Centred Approach to Myths and Culture	70
Bibliography	73
Glossary	83
Index	87